

STEP 3 **Vulnerability assessment**

CAUTION The stages in the vulnerability assessment are in recommended order only. Some flexibility in approach will be needed. The questions in this section are only guideline questions and should be adapted as appropriate for the various focus groups and according to community issues.

When a hazard happens, elements at risk, such as people, crops, buildings and services, may be lost, damaged or disrupted. These elements are normally only identified after a disaster has happened in a 'damage and needs assessment'. The action taken is to distribute relief items to meet immediate needs. This action does not address the reasons why the disaster happened. The affected community could therefore be hit by another disaster in the future when the same or a different hazard strikes.

A needs assessment after a disaster looks at the immediate effects of the disaster on elements in the community. However, a vulnerability assessment looks at the potential for elements to be at risk. By acting on this type of information, it is possible to reduce the risk of disaster happening in the first place.

Vulnerability assessment involves looking at the:

- **ELEMENTS AT RISK** to establish **what** the impact of the hazard could be (mainly factual information based on people's past experience)
- **VULNERABLE CONDITIONS** to establish **why** the elements are at risk
- **PRESSURES** to establish **who** is creating the vulnerable conditions and **how** this is done
- **UNDERLYING CAUSES** to establish **why** vulnerable conditions are created or ignored by the pressures
- **SPIRITUAL CONTEXT** to consider what beliefs encourage, ignore or challenge vulnerability and its causes.

Each of the **five categories of analysis** (see page 25) is used to help ensure that a detailed understanding of vulnerability is achieved by the focus groups.

Be aware that what is considered a vulnerability in one category of analysis may be seen as a capacity in another category. Also, views on what is a vulnerability and what is a capacity may vary from one group to another. For example, the migration of men in search of work during hard times may be seen by women as a social vulnerability which could also lead to the spread of HIV. However, men might view migration as an economic capacity.

The most logical way to carry out the assessment is to take a category of analysis and work across the table on page 40. It can be helpful to tick the boxes in the table as the assessment progresses to make sure that nothing is missed out. In reality, cells of the table may be ticked in a random order, depending on the course of focus group discussions.

		Elements at risk	Vulnerable conditions	Pressures	Underlying causes
CATEGORY OF ANALYSIS	Economic assets				
	Natural assets				
	Constructed assets				
	Individual assets				
	Social assets				

NOTE: Conflict may be identified as a major factor influencing vulnerability to hazards. For example, people displaced due to conflict could be more vulnerable to HIV. If the local area is relatively secure, it may be appropriate to continue with the PADR process. However, if there is insecurity or the only way of addressing the vulnerability is for the conflict to end, use caution in continuing with PADR (see Section 5.2). During the action planning step, it might be decided that the only way to significantly reduce vulnerability is to address the conflict.



Activities

- 1 Organise focus group meetings.
- 2 Select a priority hazard.
- 3 Explain the different levels of vulnerability to the group, from elements at risk to underlying causes.
- 4 Select a category of analysis.
- 5 Ask the focus groups some general questions about the category of analysis for that hazard (see below).
- 6 Work through the table for that category of analysis from left to right, asking relevant questions as the table is completed.
- 7 Identify which vulnerabilities are of most concern to each focus group.
- 8 Repeat activities 4–7 with the other categories of analysis.
- 9 If there is another high-priority hazard, repeat activities 4–8, on another set of tables.
- 10 Add the findings of each focus group on to the large version of the Crunch model, displayed in the community. Ensure that any sensitive issues, such as references to specific people, are not included.
- 11 Consider interviewing key informants at this stage, if appropriate (see page 54).



Tools

- Tools for the various categories of analysis include:
- **ECONOMIC ASSETS** seasonal calendar
 - **NATURAL ASSETS** risk mapping, transect walk
 - **CONSTRUCTED ASSETS** risk mapping, transect walk

- **INDIVIDUAL ASSETS** risk mapping
- **SOCIAL ASSETS** Venn diagram

Category of analysis

Economic assets

EXAMPLES OF GENERAL QUESTIONS

- What are the seasonal activities in the local area, and when do they occur? (such as agricultural activities, casual labour, migration)
- When is the hardest time of year (perhaps when different hazards combine to affect people's livelihoods)?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of men, women and children?
- How much do these activities earn?
- Do people sell produce, or is produce only for household consumption?
- Are people able to save any money? What do people save for?
- Do people borrow money for anything? What interest has to be paid?
- Do people own any land, or are they dependent on landowners?

EXAMPLES OF MORE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

Elements at risk	Vulnerable conditions	Pressures	Underlying causes
WHAT are the likely impacts of the hazard?	WHY does the hazard affect the elements at risk?	WHO is creating the vulnerable conditions? HOW is this done?	WHY are vulnerable conditions created / ignored by the pressures?
• Which economic activities or assets are most affected by the hazard?	• Why does the hazard disrupt activities?	<i>Topics to consider:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work opportunities and wages • Credit and savings opportunities 	• Are people denied access to work opportunities? Why?
• Are people forced to sell assets? • What do people sell first, second, third?	• Why does this happen? Does anybody benefit from this?		• Are people paid a fair wage? Why not?
• Would basic needs (such as food and water) be affected, and how long does this last?	• Why are people unable to meet basic needs during the hazard?		• Do people have access to finance schemes? Why not?
• Is it harder to borrow money during the hazard?	• Why can people not get a loan?		• Is money lent under fair terms?
Spiritual context			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the spiritual context affect economic assets? • Does the church play any role in increasing economic vulnerability? If so, how? 			

Category of analysis

Natural assets

EXAMPLES OF GENERAL QUESTIONS

- What natural assets do people use?
 - Water for drinking
 - Water for irrigation, cooking, bathing, cleaning
 - Soil
 - Trees for produce, building materials, shade, fuel
 - Fuel for fire apart from wood, such as animal dung
 - Fish stocks
 - Minerals (such as clay, sand)
- How important are the climate, landscape and geographical location to people?

EXAMPLES OF MORE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

Elements at risk	Vulnerable conditions	Pressures	Underlying causes
WHAT are the likely impacts of the hazard?	WHY does the hazard affect the elements at risk?	WHO is creating the vulnerable conditions? HOW is this done?	WHY are vulnerable conditions created / ignored by the pressures?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which natural assets are affected by the hazard? How are they affected? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are these natural assets affected by the hazard? • How long does it take damaged natural assets to recover after the hazard? • Is there a lack of any natural assets? How does this affect people? 	<p><i>Topics to consider:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authorities • Land ownership • Logging / deforestation • Industry / pollution • Agriculture (large-scale) • Population growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is there a lack of natural assets? • Why are people denied access to natural assets?
<p>Spiritual context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the spiritual context affect natural assets? • Does the church play a role in increasing vulnerability in relation to natural assets? If so, how? 			

Category of analysis

Constructed assets

EXAMPLE OF GENERAL QUESTIONS

- What man-made constructed assets exist in the local area? For example, houses, wells, tools and equipment, community buildings, communications (telephones, roads, transport), power supply.

EXAMPLES OF MORE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

Elements at risk	Vulnerable conditions	Pressures	Underlying causes
WHAT are the likely impacts of the hazard?	WHY does the hazard affect the elements at risk?	WHO is creating the vulnerable conditions? HOW is this done?	WHY are vulnerable conditions created / ignored by the pressures?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What are buildings constructed from (such as mud, brick)? •How are these buildings affected by the hazard? •How are water supplies affected by the hazard? •How are tools and equipment affected by the hazard? •How are government or community buildings affected by the hazard? •How does the hazard affect communications? •How are power supplies affected by the hazard? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Why are these affected by the hazard? 	<p><i>Topics to consider:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land ownership • Local authorities • Religious groups • Building regulations • Access to community buildings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Why are people unable to prevent damage to constructed assets? •Why do owners of constructed assets not help and how could they help?
<p>Spiritual context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •How does the spiritual context affect constructed assets? •Does the church play any role in increasing vulnerability in relation to constructed assets? If so, how? 			

Category of analysis **Individual assets**

EXAMPLE OF GENERAL QUESTIONS

- What skills, knowledge and individual strengths do local people have?

EXAMPLES OF MORE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

Elements at risk	Vulnerable conditions	Pressures	Underlying causes
WHAT are the likely impacts of the hazard?	WHY does the hazard affect the elements at risk?	WHO is creating the vulnerable conditions? HOW is this done?	WHY are vulnerable conditions created / ignored by the pressures?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Who is most likely to be affected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - during the hazard? - after the hazard? •What happens to these people? (For example, are they killed, injured, affected by illness, displaced, traumatised?) •Which diseases affect local people as a result of the hazard? •Who is most likely to be affected by these? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Why are these people most likely to be affected? Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mobility - health - skills - education and literacy •Is there any knowledge of what to do when a hazard hits? 	<p><i>Topics to consider:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Health services •Social services •Education and training 	<p><i>Topics to consider:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Access to health care •Access to social welfare schemes •Education policies and curriculum
<p>Spiritual context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •How does the spiritual context affect individual assets? •Does the church play any role in increasing individual vulnerability? If so, how? 			

Category of analysis

Social assets

EXAMPLES OF GENERAL QUESTIONS

- What relationships are there with:
 - Other community groups
 - Other communities
 - Employers
 - NGOs
 - Religious groups
 - People with power and authority (such as government officials)?

EXAMPLES OF MORE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

Elements at risk	Vulnerable conditions	Pressures	Underlying causes
WHAT are the likely impacts of the hazard?	WHY does the hazard affect the elements at risk?	WHO is creating the vulnerable conditions? HOW is this done?	WHY are vulnerable conditions created / ignored by the pressures?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do relationships with different groups change in hard times? • What is the consequence of these changes? • How do relationships between men and women change? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do some of these relationships get worse? • What more should be done to help? • Is there any conflict during hard times? • Is there any lack of leadership during crisis? 	Topics to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authorities • Traditional leadership • Social groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do people have access to all the groups they want to? • How much influence do people have over the decisions made by leaders in times of disaster?
<p>Spiritual context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the spiritual context affect social assets? • Does the church play any role in increasing social vulnerability? If so, how? 			

Prioritising vulnerabilities

Once all of the vulnerabilities have been identified, focus groups should come together to prioritise the vulnerabilities that they want to address. Opinions may differ within and between focus groups. The facilitator should help the groups to find common ground in order to identify the priority vulnerabilities for the community as a whole. Other local people could be present at this meeting in order to enhance local ownership of the process.

Once the key priorities have been identified, use the ranking tool given on page 32 so that each individual can vote for their priority vulnerability.

EXAMPLE OF VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT: drought in Ethiopia

Elements at risk	Vulnerable conditions	Pressures	Underlying causes
WHAT are the likely impacts of the hazard?	WHY does the hazard affect the elements at risk?	WHO is creating the vulnerable conditions? HOW is this done?	WHY are vulnerable conditions created / ignored by the pressures?
ECONOMIC ASSETS			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of crops • Loss of livestock • Forced sale of assets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livelihoods dependent on rain-fed agriculture • Extreme poverty • Decline in soil fertility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MINISTRY OF HEALTH Limited healthcare provision • MINISTRY OF EDUCATION Limited support to primary schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • POLITICAL GOVERNANCE State ownership of land, corruption, lack of transparency and accountability, lack of participatory development planning, lack of concern for poor people, regional conflict, ineffective United Nations systems • ECONOMIC POLICIES Unfavourable terms of trade, Western secular values, greed • CULTURE Inappropriate cultural customs and practices
NATURAL ASSETS			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortage of water • Dry pasture land • Soil erosion • Lack of wild food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unreliable rainfall • Environmental degradation • No forest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE Limited support for farmers • VILLAGE ELDER Promote large family size 	
CONSTRUCTED ASSETS			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shallow wells dry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited water harvesting schemes • No protected water sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NATIONAL GOVERNMENT Development policy and budget, land ownership, environmental policy, disaster management and poverty reduction strategies 	
INDIVIDUAL ASSETS			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased malnutrition • Increased morbidity • Increased mortality • Loss of strength • Increased stress 	<p><i>Limited knowledge of:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural resource management • Health care • Family planning • Government structures and processes • Human rights • Low literacy / education • Lack of vocational skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION Terms of trade • INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS Debt servicing • NGOS Development policies and practice • COPTIC CHURCH Festivals and ceremonies reduce number of livestock 	
SOCIAL ASSETS			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased conflict within and between families • Disruption to education • Increased migration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of education • Large family size • Competition for resources • Gender inequalities • Many traditional ceremonies • Weak civil society 		
Spiritual context			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animistic beliefs, expensive religious ceremonies 			